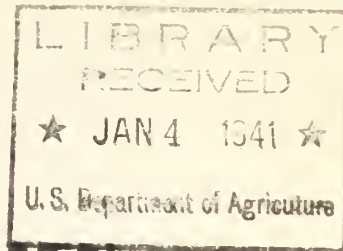


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Facts for NORTHEAST COMMITTEEMEN

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NO. 12

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

We have talked with a good many AAA committeemen in the last few days. Most of them are not discouraged, but they are pretty serious. They usually get around to a question that goes about like this: *"It looks like tough sledding ahead for farmers - and for the country too, for that matter. We believe it's our job as committeemen to help out as far as we can. But what needs to be done and what can we do about it?"*

"This is a democracy. We can handle our problems if we agree how to do it. We will agree if we have the facts."

Farmers attending our Regional Conference in New York dug into this problem for three days a week or two ago. Two hundred and fifty committee-men there unanimously adopted two reports. We believe they will help us all understand the problem and our job better. We are rather proud of the work these committeemen did. We believe they represented truly the broad-gauge, cooperative attitude that characterizes the best farmer thinking. In the following pages of this issue of *Facts* you will find the full report of the Committee on Northeast Agricultural Welfare, which summarizes the attitude of the Conference towards many of our most important problems. We believe you will find it helpful as a foundation for your work on the 1941 Conservation Program. We suggest that you read it carefully. Here it is:

Carl G. Wooster

Carl G. Wooster, Chairman
Northeast Regional Committee.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON NORTHEAST AGRICULTURAL WELFARE
ADOPTED BY ANNUAL NORTHEAST REGIONAL AAA CONFERENCE
NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER, 1940

Conditions That Endanger Farm Prosperity

The critical situation facing Northeastern agriculture is the result of the cutting off of most of the foreign market for American farm products by the war, of menacing tendencies toward unjustified increase in the prices of the commodities farmers buy, of probable serious local shortages of farm labor, and of the fact that the national plant is expanded and in many areas still manned to produce far in excess of the available markets. To protect agriculture against disasters from these causes is a necessary part of the task of maintaining the American unity that is essential to national defense just as is the protection of the welfare of each other important group.

The agriculture of the Northeast is little affected immediately by the loss of export markets since it is engaged principally in supplying local demand, and it will, temporarily, find its own outlets improved as a result of the present increase in employment.

Agricultural Adjustments Must be Shared Fairly

However, we recognize that the shifts that will inevitably be made in the South and the West from production for export will be shifts into the production of goods for our markets. The loss of foreign markets will, as a result, eventually be our problem as well as that of those regions.

We recognize that maintaining the incomes that cotton and wheat growers can secure from cotton and wheat protects Northeastern farmers from greatly increased competition in our fields of production, and we support the adjustment program and other measures used to maintain these incomes. However, it is clear that the South must eventually shift its type of farming to a substantial extent. The Northeast accepts the principle of unity in agriculture and will endeavor to do its part in sharing the problem of ultimate adjustment with the South.

Similarly the Northeast is benefited by having grain prices established at fair levels and supports the corn program of the corn belt. We believe, however, that careful study should be made of all the effects of the rate at which the corn loan payment is made when there is a large carryover.

Soil Conservation Should Mean Lower Costs, Not Surpluses

We believe that increasing demand should provide a market for such increases in the production of milk and Northeastern fruits as seem feasible in the near future. The soil-building program is likely to increase somewhat the supply and quality of hay and pasture available for dairy feeding. We believe that committeemen in discussing the program with farmers should point out the desirability of using these better feeds to reduce costs rather than to expand production.

Production Adjustment and Marketing Measures Should Work Together

Although potato production this year is seriously in excess of market needs, we do not recommend making potato acreage allotments smaller. As a means of encouraging stabilization of potato acreages at needed levels more effectively, we urge that in case exceptionally high yields should again necessitate surplus buying or other measures, such activities by the Federal government be confined to areas which have complied reasonably with the acreage program and to growers who are cooperating in it.

The Most Important Next Step - Every American Adequately Fed

It is the considered opinion of this conference that the measures that have been developed in the past few years to enable the unemployed, or those with low incomes, to obtain sufficient quantities of food and clothing, should be expanded to reach every one of the 30 million Americans who are in need. This would be sound policy at any time; it is imperative today if every American is to have the strength and the will to defend American democracy.

Farmers have always stood unqualifiedly for the principle of making America's potential abundance fully serve the people of the country. We know, however, that it is impossible for agriculture, unaided, to shoulder the burden of feeding well toward one-third of our population who are unable to pay living prices because of our failure as a nation to complete the steps necessary to maintain full employment at fair wages.

The urgency of national defense requires that the nation assume the obligation of seeing that every American is adequately fed and clothed. Agriculture stands ready as always to meet every need for food and fiber; we are ready to make our share of the sacrifices to that end.

We specifically recommend that the food and cotton stamp plans be expanded as fast as possible to the entire country. We favor the continuance of the direct purchase and distribution of surplus foods where necessary.

Much of the solution of the problem of transforming farm surpluses into full dinner pails is not necessarily a matter of government assistance. Organized groups of farm producers can aid by better marketing methods, particularly those that tend to reduce marketing costs. Many methods of reducing costs of distribution, and lowering retail prices as a result, have become available in the past few years. No obstacle should be permitted to bar their rapid adoption. Every saving in distribution costs means that low income consumers can buy more. Particularly should city or state control measures be set up or carried out only with great care so as to avoid freezing unnecessarily costly distribution methods.

Soil Conservation Should Be Continued

The threat to future national wellbeing from the rapidly accelerating rate of loss and deterioration of the nation's soil had become so serious that we believe that the remarkably successful efforts of the past few years to turn our national course from soil destruction to soil preservation and rebuilding should not be interrupted except under the gravest national necessity. As conditions stand at present, we believe conservation activity should be increased rather than decreased.

Committeemen's First Responsibility - To Have the Program Understood

To make our conservation work even more successful, we believe the most important step is to have the need, the methods and the accomplishments of conservation more thoroughly understood by the great mass of the farm population. We believe that committeemen should plan their work with full farmer understanding as a principal objective. We have not approached the desirable limit of use of any of the soil-building practices.

Particularly should it be understood that adjustment of crop acreages planned to increase real soil-building crop rotations is a fundamental part of conservation.

We Can Protect Against Rising Costs

Farmers are gravely concerned by the threat of rapidly rising costs. We do not expect general increases in the prices of the products we sell. As a result, sharply rising prices of the things we buy would bring grave consequences. We believe that every increase in the prices of the more important material and equipment used in farm production should be thoroughly investigated to determine its justice and necessity. Recent increases in feed prices should be looked into at once. Some expansion in the production of essential farm supplies by farmer cooperatives may be made necessary if investigation indicates profiteering. It will be necessary for agriculture to be prepared to support additional measures if prices threaten to get out of hand.

Good Wages Help the Farmer

The labor problem is a difficult one as it affects agriculture. Agriculture has a direct interest in full employment at good wages. The size of industrial payrolls determines more than any other thing the size of our farm market and the possibility of fair prices for farm products. We have probably tended to overestimate the effect of wage increases on the prices farmers pay. Such increases in industrial wages as have occurred to date have been offset by increase of production per worker so that they have given no real basis for rising prices.

Measures to Help Meet Farm Labor Problem

The Northeastern farmer operating in the part of the country where there is the greatest concentration and expansion of defense industries is already experiencing difficulties that are likely to increase greatly, in securing necessary farm labor. Agriculture as a whole will gain greatly as the excess labor supply is transformed into good customers earning industrial wages. But the principal supplies of surplus farm labor are in other sections of the country, while the rising industrial and defense demand for labor is primarily here. We recommend that to the fullest practical extent new defense plants be located in the South and West where the principal surplus farm populations live. We urge in addition that the public employment agencies be contacted to secure the fullest cooperation in meeting farm labor shortages and that conferences be held with WPA to iron out any obstacles to temporary farm employment of those on WPA rolls.

National Unity of Agriculture the Only Way

It is obvious that agriculture's problems are national in scope. The welfare of the farmers of one region is indissolubly interlocked with the welfare of the farmers of each other region. There is no sound basis for farm policy except national unity of agriculture - a unity based on mutual understanding and a just mutual helpfulness.

Agriculture Can Prosper Only as the Country Prospers

It is equally true that many of the problems of agriculture stem from causes outside the field of agriculture - from widespread unemployment, poverty among agriculture's customers and rigid price structures that undermine our whole economy. We realize that the solution of problems such as these is indispensable to real and successful defense of American democracy. As farmers and citizens we stand ready to cooperate to the full with labor and industry in moving forward on these fronts.